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ON FINISH IN ART?

WHAT IS Finish? This is not an uninteresting question, and one upon the answer to which much depends in criticism as well as in the formation of a just private judgment; for it is obvious that what one man calls finish may be a very different thing from that which another understands by the use of the same term, and the discrepancy be a fertile source of error; it appears to us that the word is usually taken in a mistaken sense, to signify, when applied to the works of any particular artist, that a vast amount of detail has been represented in a single picture or any given space of small compass; in the professional phrase, that work has been "*carried far*;" that is to say, that great patience has been employed in representing as much as a powerful eyesight could perceive. This may be the case, and yet the quality of a given work be by no means that of finish, but rather of extreme minuteness, or the representation of a great number of things in a small space; as, for instance, that famous cherry-stone which we have all read of, that bore on its surface the portraits of I do not know how many popes and emperors; a work of wonderful minuteness and labor, but one with which no one will compare the Thesens, taking it merely as an example of finish, with its skin-like surface and flexible muscles, over whose marble body the apparently pulsating veins have their course. The minuteness of the engraving on the cherry-stone is by no means entitled to be called *finish*, inasmuch as it is not the work of thought, but only of keen, natural, or assisted vision; to the eye of a fly, for instance, all this is as nothing, and why should it be more to that of a man? The Thesens, on the contrary, is a result of the application of the most learned and accomplished intellect, bent with indomitable energy on the accomplishment of a work of thought, and exemplification of profound acquired knowledge, to gain which is in itself a deed of intellectual prowess. The engraver of this cherry-stone might have been employed to carry the execution of the Thesens still further, and produce upon the surface of the marble the wrinkles, nay, even the pores of the skin; all this would be perfectly possible, but would it have improved the statue as a work of Art? decidedly not. A waxwork figure is not an atom nearer to truth of nature because it has hairs stuck round its eyes in imitation of the natural cilia of the eyelids—in fact, it is infinitely less like life for this, as every one must feel when he looks at such abominations.

There is then clearly a limit to which the artist may reach, but not pass beyond, and what is this limit? A question we must ask, because upon the reply depends that of our first demand, "What is Finish?" The limit has been admitted to be this;—that, as soon as a work of Art comes to the attempt to deceive the senses in an endeavor to create a fact, out of that which is not—to tell a lie, in

short—pretending to be other than a representation of a fact, and not a fact itself, then we say it ceases to be a work of Art, and becomes a sham, a waxwork, and a lie. The famous grapes of Zeuxis were of this class, unless the tale of the birds pecking them be altogether an invention, like that which describes Rubens throwing a sponge at his picture, in despairing rage at his failure to represent the foam round a horse's mouth; a villainous scandal upon Rubens, who was far too clever an executant to be baffled by any such simple matter as this foam in question. The attempt to deceive is then the Rubicon, beyond which the painter may not pass, he may not place upon the surface of his picture a fly so painted that you would raise your hand to remove it; but he may carry his expression of knowledge of natural incident as far as he can or pleases: he may place this same fly in the picture itself, diving into a flower-bell, or dipping into a milk-jug, and this will be legitimate art, although of the lowest order (of course unless the introduction of such incident illustrates the feeling of the picture, when it immediately rises into a species of design.)

This may seem clear enough; but let us, however, have recourse to an illustration from the works of Robert Browning, who has succeeded in representing in words the exact thing which we require; it may seem an odd thing to attempt to elucidate the meaning of a phrase in one art by an example from another, but as we have no engravings to assist us, it will at least be worth the trial, more particularly when so great an artist as Robert Browning has painted a picture so aptly to the subject as that which we are about to place before our readers. The first example we propose to use is from "*Sordello*," and we take it, as the poet intended, as an example of unnatural minuteness or false finish. It is a description of the bark of a tree—

"As knops that stud some almsgut to the pith
Pricked for gum, wry thence, and crinkled worse
Than pursed up eyelids of a river-horse,
Sunning himself o' the slime when whirls the breeze,"*

The very syllables sets one's teeth on edge, and the passage is an admirable example of over-labored minuteness.

Compare this with the following, from the same author's poem of "*Paracelsus*," describing an old wall, as perfect a piece of painting as Hunt or Millais have ever executed.

—"one old populous green wall,
Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,
Grey crickets, and shy lizards, and quick spiders,
Each family of the silver-threaded moss—
Which, look through, near, this way, and it appears
A stubble field, or a cane-brake—a marsh

* *Breeze*, we should explain, is the gad-fly.

Of bulrush, whitening in the sun : laugh now !
 Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,
 Looking out, wondering at the world—or best,
 Yon painted snail, with his gay shell of dew,
 Travelling to see the glossy balls high up
 Hung by the caterpillars like gold-lamps."

Now, this is finish, while the other is minuteness; for observe the justness of the adjectives—"the ever-busy flies," "shy lizards," "quick spiders:" the changes of the fancy of the resemblance of the "silver-threaded moss," "a stubble field, cane-brake," or "a marsh of bulrush whitening in the sun." Notice how the domesticity of the crickets is suggested, each one having "a house," from whence it "wonders at the world;" lastly, see how the linger on the ultimate lines marks the slow progress of the snail on his quest. How much more expressive is this than the painful wire-drawing of the former, which in four lines has only succeeded in expressing the one quality of roughness on the bark of a tree, without a word on its color, weight, hardness or softness (for it might be the bark of an oak or a cork-tree, for all we know), it does not even point out how the wrinkles ran, whether they were horizontal or vertical; but the second quotation paints us a whole world; you see the color of the wall itself, the natural characteristics of several of its insect tenants; the sheen of the moss, and of this the fact, that the fancy could play about it like summer lightning or sunlight upon rippling water.

We have taken one of these as an example of finish, and the other of minuteness, or finish carried to the excess of suicide, as it were, for it destroys itself by its own effort,—and how often is this same result to be observed in painting; an artist whose sight is more piercing than his judgment clear, gives himself wholly to the attempt to produce a deceptive effect upon the observer, forgets himself and the limit of his art in the intense strain to impress upon others the exactness of his labor, and loses sight of Art altogether. At Hampton Court are two portraits of an old man and woman, which are carried to the extreme of ridicule in minuteness; it is possible, by going close enough, to see how the artist has shown even the wrinkles of the skin, and even the little glossy hairs which grow upon it; yet, if you go half a yard away, the impression of labor is lost entirely in a sort of hardness as of colored ivory; the heavy folds of the skin are not pendulous and soft, but rigid and crinkled, and in the endeavor to give the high finish of form, the truthful variety of colors has been utterly foregone; every part of each face looks dead and lifeless, the eyes are dim and bleared, even although, on exact inspection, one can see the reflection of the objects which have been in the chamber where the sitter was placed. To compare with these we may attempt to describe a portrait of the Doge Loredano, by Giovanni Bellenni, which is in the English National Gallery; it is a bust-portrait, extending to a little below the shoulders; the doge wears the ducal cap with its quaint rounded peak at the top, like a Phrygian head-dress, except that this one has a stiff lining, and

so maintains its upright form when upon the head; over the shoulders is a silk damask mantle of greenish-white and dark green, secured by a row of buttons from the throat; the background is greenish-blue; the face itself has the dark bronzed golden hue by which the painters of the best times of the Venetian School so happily reproduced the true Italian skin-tint; all the visage is covered with wrinkles, not seamed and rolled up, so to speak, like the other portraits we have just referred to, but soft, rich in tone, clear though opaque, and full of breath and life and circulating blood: the wrinkles have gathered round the eyelids, and the folds about the mouth are distinctly, though not harshly, marked, while the eyes are as clear as day, and show thought, penetration, and an Italian character of subtle humor: the whole face is as superior in painting to the first examples as the man represented was to the coarse, heavy, sensualized Dutch boors, who have been handed down to us by the laborious trifling of the other painter.

Now here at once is the distinction between finish and minuteness; the one picture has life and character in it, while the others have but so much oil and pigment; the one is painted with the lightness of a skillful hand, which preserved the brightness of the colors, and thereby rendered the deep clearness of flesh; while the Dutch portraits are heavy and clouded in color, want truth in modelling as well as transparency and force of light and shade, qualities for which the Italian portrait is eminently remarkable.

Finish is, therefore, not necessarily labor, but rather the result of experienced thought and educated power of perception. It was not finish when the painter of the Dutch portraits pored over skin-wrinkles and hair—but minute trifling; and when Bellenni succeeded in representing the dusk gold of the doge's face, and penetrated deeply into the soul of the man, so that he bears to this day the inscrutable smile upon the mouth and round the eyes, which he bore while sitting,—it *was* finish, it was study; it showed the subtle wisdom of the artist, and his heart's power is laid out before us like a book, and we smile as at a marvel.

In the corner of one of Millais's pictures, the "Return of the Dove to the Ark," there is some hay carelessly tossed on the floor, down-trodden and tumbled over; now this hay was one of the most extraordinary pieces of skillful execution that could ever have been looked upon; you saw the shadows of every blade of the perished grass, you saw where each one had got broken and folded, and twisted about its neighbor, you could perceive the dry, dull springiness of its quality, you saw the brown, scorched, the grey-faded and the half-withered green of its varied stages of decay. It is impossible to describe how finished this was, yet it was executed in a few hours, and passed from under the artist's hand a wonder, perfect and complete. In looking at it you instantaneously perceived that swift stroke upon stroke had been laid upon the canvas unerring, undeviating, unceasing, until all was done; yet, what distinguished it was, that there was not the slightest

sign of labor about it; masterly and perfect, it was there, and executed with the same ease as a skillful musician brings forth music from an accustomed instrument.

This is what is justly to be called *finish*, for it is the result of a perfectly trained hand, accomplishing with conquering ease a thing of ineffable difficulty, a task over which another might have spent a month, and yet failed entirely after all.

It may seem needless to insist upon the vast distinction which should be made in the use of these two terms—*finish* and *minuteness*—the one the result of solid and learned skill, the other the accomplishment of laborious trifling.

Yet, to take another example of rightfully employed skill from the works of a modern poet, we may quote that most extraordinary instance of success, the subject, or rather the sense, of a passage by the sound of the words composing it, or what is called echoing the sense by the sound; we will take it from "The Golden Year," by the Poet Laureate, where a speaker affirming a sturdy, high-hearted, modern maxim, to the effect that God helps them who help themselves, gets confirming thunder, such as Zeus might have made to be heard at the right hand of Helenus, for the poet says,

"He spoke; and, high above, I heard them blast
The steep slate quarry, and the great echo flap
And buffet round the hills from bluff to bluff."

This is rightly employed skill, the just knowledge of the material used in the words which are so powerfully employed to make the climax to a noble poem.

It seems to have been the converse of this;—the substituting of dull manual labor for the exercise of trained thought, which led Raphael, in his youth, away from the simple and pure style he had learned in the school of Pietro Perugino, which both his early works show him to have practised with such success; for it is then alone we can recognize the sincere efforts of a genius second to few in the world: it was in this, we say, that he became charmed with the false facility by which he could execute great works, outstrip the slower progress of his own contemporaries, and with self-asserting audacity, accomplish the immense commissions he received, with a rapidity which kept pace with the impatience of his employers. In order to do this, Raphael neglected that nature, which his predecessors always insisted upon as the groundwork of Art, he neglected nature and drew upon the finite stores of memory and the fallacious gleams of feeling. He did not employ either the delicate skill of the Florentines, or the gorgeous enthusiasm (we know no better word) which guided the Venetian, but chose a course, which held by neither of these, more false than even the dull toil of the Dutch painter, whose two portraits we have just referred to; he rejected nature altogether; his draperies were no longer draperies, for they are frequently impossible in the forms of their casting; his faces often were outrageous violations of life, as we may see in looking at some of the cartoons, where he has face after face shame-

fully out of drawing; his clouds were no longer clouds, but heaps of preposterous wool-bags set in blue; his trees were no longer trees, but impossible contortions of black and dingy green: down from one low depth to a lower in feeling, he lost the truthful heart of his youth, and imposed upon a credulous dilettante world a dozen scowling ruffians for the Lord's Apostles, the models for whom must have come from the same class which furnished Salvator Rosa with his bandits (that is if the last-named culprit used models at all). He hung huge blankets upon their backs, and called the series Cartoons from the life of Christ.

Doubtless there is much in this that will astonish the reader, and perhaps he will say, no doubt, "It is easy to assert and lay down the law; but where is the proof?" For answer, we advise him to take any good set of engravings from the Cartoons, and look at them fairly, divesting himself from all conventional prejudices. Are the draperies like any earthly fabric except a good stiff blanket? Are the trees earthly trees? Or if it be said that the great mind of Raphael could not be expected to stoop to execute such things as these (however much we think it ought to have done), then we are content to refer the whole matter to any single head. Take the head of John, for instance, does the reader think that that low-browed, angular-faced man, with the heavy nostrils, the stupid, feelingless eyes, the pendent lips—parted and thoughtless—those pulpy cheeks and arched eyebrows, with that long, badly drawn neck, and mean action—we ask, does the reader think this could have been the face of him, the Beautiful, the Beloved, he who was chosen to record the thunder words that came "like the sound of many waters," and saw that

—"Cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,
That on the sea, within his hand
A bitter sweetling of a book ———"

So that heavy-looking man whom we see in the "Sacrifice at Lystra," meant for the "Son of Consolation," Barnabas, one of the last chosen. Could it be from *his* mouth that the words of the Gospel were to come?

Take the cartoon of "Christ's charge to Peter," and see how little interest the individuals in the group of Apostles display in the solemn and affecting occasion when they are parting from their Lord, their Master, and their Friend. Peter alone is active, the others look on like mere spectators who had little concern in what passed before them; such utter helplessness reigns among them that one needs a knowledge of the facts of the occasion to see that they have any right to their position in the picture, and are not mere chance beholders of what is taking place.

Look at the "Miraculous draught of Fishes," and see how calmly the Apostles sit in their impossible boats; not seeming to hang their very breath upon the words which come from the Lord's lips, they appear to have lapsed into mere fishers and dwellers upon the shore again, who are not at all astonished at the miracle which goes on before their eyes, and of which they are the agents; those brawny

figures which are hauling in the nets are intent only upon the spoil, and he alone who has stepped from one boat into the other seems to feel the slightest emotion ; what must have been the apathetic heartlessness which could represent such a scene in this manner. Dilettante critics have discovered marvels of subtlety in the placing of that prow of the boat in the side of the picture, and in the attitudes and the selection of those extraordinary birds which turn their backs to us in the foreground, but will the reader honestly and frankly judge for himself as to the propriety of the introduction of these strange spirits ? the boat is said to be profoundly placed for the purpose of carrying the line of the composition out of the picture ; but why did the line of the composition need to be carried out of the picture, or if so, where was it intended to go to, are inquiries which suggest themselves to us. Why not complete the picture in itself as the subject is complete therein ? If the action of the birds in drinking is really praising God, it is a confirmation of the nursery legend to that effect which we little expected to find. Why was that duty to be inculcated in this way ? surely a better means might have been found than through these very ugly bipeds, however prominent may be the position in which Raphael chose to place them.

So much in these cartoons of Raphael is expressive of a feeling which had become utterly vitiated from long indulgence, and shows how he fell from the place of one of the greatest minds which have had a throne in Art, to that which becomes the man who could execute such things as these we have described. If the mind of Raphael had not been so great, the fall would not have been so immense, nor would it have been worth while to have discoursed upon its short-comings ; the faults and errors of the great are alone worthy of commenting upon. We are conscious that scornful laughter may follow these remarks upon a series of works which have received the admiring sanction of nearly four centuries, and which, in England, at least, are considered as almost the greatest of the works of the most glorious of painters ; yet, despite this, we say that it ill becomes any one to follow blindly the opinions of others if he have the power of deciding for himself, for the right of private judgment is given to all, and while, far from denying the right of Raphael to one of the most distinguished places in the world of Art, we venture to submit these observations to any one who will take the trouble to examine into their value, and decide upon the position in which he will choose to place the Prince of Painters after due consideration of such charges against him.

We have introduced these remarks upon the Cartoons, because it seemed to us absolutely necessary to mark out an instance of the decadence which took place in the practice of Art, immediately the great painters (here, as elsewhere, represented by the person of Raphael), chose to abandon the study of individual nature for every object in their pictures, and relying upon their own memories and acquired knowledge, cast disdainfully aside the fetters of

fact to revel in delusive freedom, which only led deeper and deeper into a new slough of falsehood and error ; until the arts, instead of being a vehicle of Christian delight, became little else than the attendants upon a heathen procession of Phallus-worshippers and the perpetuators of Pagan ceremonies and obscene delights.

Why was this ? Surely, because the study of truth had been abandoned ; men no longer contented themselves with reproducing the details and the beautiful expressiveness of that nature which their predecessors had sought to penetrate into the heart of : no longer they sat hour by hour in delighted patience, studying how to lay before the world the riches of those mines of thought and feeling which had been given to the painter to expound—as the song they should sing to God's glory ; yet, how they neglected this, how they fell from one low level to another, till at last we saw the climax of all this in the absurd chiaro-oscuro of Correggio—the false sentiment of the latter Roman school, ending in the utter inanity, the hopeless folly and weakness of Albano, and the brilliant frivolity of Watteau. They fell thus, not so much through the fault and error of Raphael, as through the sin of the age in which they lived, a sin which they strove not to oppose, though such was their mission ; though to accomplish such duty, God had given them the power of the eye and the mind. They fell because the age was corrupt, spreading like a huge ulcer over Politics, Poetry, and the Arts, all of which were plunged in the same slough, a withering desert of heart and soul, grown at last such that nothing but fire, and ruin, and revolution, could effect a clearance of all unutterable abominations, and allow the new life to creep forth brilliant and pure again.

We have said they fell, and that part of the cause of such falling was because Raphael, and others with him, sold themselves for their own ease, in order to do rapidly, though falsely, what their precursors had not dared to attempt, for in the humility of the hearts of these early men, they do not appear to have regarded with horror and some sort of disbelief, the bare possibility of working out the effort of their minds, except through the most matured considerations, and the most profound forethought and judgment. In no case do we find an example before the time of Perugino's great pupil, in which the artist has appeared to disdain the effort which he considered inevitably necessary in order to produce a grave and severe work of art. They always seem to have regarded the call to *finish*—as we have attempted to define the meaning of the word—as a sacred duty which it was impossible not to attempt the fulfillment of.

Should even the interpretation of the meaning of this phrase “ finished,” not be accepted by our readers in that extreme sense which we have endeavored to put upon it ; that is (as we hope to have suggested), that it should be taken somewhat as a synonym for the Gallicism “ *motivé*,” which seems so much in use just now to express the considerate carrying out of a preconceived design (which

should inculcate that which may be worth the expending of some months of the life of an educated and rational being upon), through devoted attention to everything which may assist the object in view. To repeat, if even this extreme interpretation will not be received, it must at least be granted, that whenever a man has resolved upon a subject which may be worthy of his labor, it is his duty, as it must be his interest, to slur over nothing which may aid his purpose, and loyally to render the truthful expression of whatever he may choose to paint. We say it must be his interest to do so, because how else shall he acquire the conquering power of execution and handling which may raise the slightest of his sketches into value: it is his interest, because in the end he must gain time; although like all victories, it must be obtained through toilsome thought and labor; it is his interest, again, we say, because he has the power of expressing so much more in the scope of a subject, by having all the variety which is inevitably suggested to the thinker while pursuing the details of execution to the highest limit. For conceive how delights and pleasures must continually arise under the accomplished hand of the earnest painter in the close observation of nature, with whom he can never become too intimate. In seeking and enjoying this pleasure, is he not fulfilling his duty as the expounder of the beautiful, secret, and tender graces which lie forever about our feet, and upon which we so contemptuously tread? To most men nature needs an interpreter, for their hearts, blind by long custom of neglect and heedlessness, pass over the glories which lie around them; it must be confessed, however, only to enter upon the enjoyment of this, the common heritage, with the more delighted zest when the interpreter they need appears and performs his duty; how many men look with astonished admiration upon the brilliant and gorgeous skies which Turner has painted, who would scarcely heed the reality, although the royal sun himself had dyed the whole firmament itself above their heads in the superbest splendors of his daily sinking. Even if men were not so unobservant as they generally are, yet it is perfectly true that millions of men, whose education and intellectual gifts would enable them to seek and discover for themselves, without interpreter or aid, the whereabouts do lie the riches of natural beauty, are unable to do so by the accidents of their positions in the world; some are too poor to travel and study anything but what lies exactly by the side of their doors, some too busy, some bound by higher duties to one spot the whole of their lives; hardly one man in ten thousand can ever hope to be free enough to indulge the natural craving for variety at will, and to serve this, to allay the thirst which has been given to these is one of the functions of the painter, and one of the duties he is called upon to perform.

Shall not the painter seek abroad, whether far from his home or near, those phases of natural character and incidents of actual beauty which abound everywhere? Shall he not seek these with reverent heart, and patient eye and judgment, and when obtained, group and arrange them

together so as to display before others whose minds require the elucidator and the teacher, so that these less fortunate ones may perceive also with him the same delights and the same glories? See and reflect on what a function is this, to be joined with the poet as the High-Priest of nature, and great almoner of the splendors which God has given to man for his mind's delight and soul's repose. Is it not much that this man, the painter, should have authority to do this? Another method of prayer and praise found for him, that he should be the bringer of grateful thoughts to the unthinking hearts of many men, or to those who are not unthinking, but who have not the power through the circumstances we have referred to, to seek much for themselves on the wide-spread feast of the earth; is it not a great thing that such a duty should lie before any man, raising new thoughts and new knowledge to the already wise, broader vision to the short-sighted, a fresh sense, new glories and new views to the willfully blind? It is much, we say, that any man should be able to lay before his fellows the grand perspective of the earth, awakening them to a fresh life, a fresh heart, and a fresh soul.

How shall the painter do all this unless he himself be deeply penetrated with the beauty of all things around him, so that he may know them with a glance of keenest sight and love, being intimate with them in all changes, and knowing the heart of them in any view, never surprised but ever expectant, ever hoping, ever observing, and ever ready to give them the fullest power of his own soul in order to lay them forth as a feast for others.

In order to do all this he must be prepared through continuance of keenest labor to seize what shall appear, and do worthy honor to it to the utmost of his need.

To conclude this portion of our subject, let us inquire how it can be possible to accomplish so elevated a purpose, unless the painter be penetrated with a conviction that in nothing is he at liberty to slur over or neglect any manifestation of a meaning; that he may never overlook the minutest portion of the individual character of aught which he chooses to represent, because if he does so, it is certain that the essence of the matter must be lost, and that he himself, by frequent acts of neglect, will so lend himself to the habit of slighting the true appearances of things (in order to follow an indolent fancy of his own), that when the time comes and he shall be required to "finish" a part of a work, which may not, on pain of total failure, be neglected, he shall be found utterly wanting and incapable, and look about in vain for the lost power which should have stood him in stead at the greatest need.

Let it now be seen that the meaning which we have attached to the phrase "Finish in Art," is a weighty one, and, perhaps, of all questions relating to execution, the most important. For it will be perceived that unless a man finishes his work, that is, carries it to the utmost extent of his capability (and it is easy to perceive at a glance when this has been done), or the nature of the picture requires; it is clear, we say, unless he does this, that he can have no true

love for either Art, subject, or picture, and his taking up with these is but as a means to display himself upon, in order that men may say, "How clever and how brilliant is this painter; see, that was done in half-an-hour!" "Wonderful!" is the reply, instead of "shameful," as it should be, because here is one who chooses rather to elevate himself in a false opinion than to spread abroad the banner of his conviction, in order that men may see the light in which he works, and learn the solid grounding of his faith.

Have we done wrong in insisting so much upon the necessity, and, indeed, upon the absolute duty of finish in Art? We scarce think it possible to do so, and are convinced that it is right, if, having the opportunity, we make use of it to enlarge upon the real importance of the matter, not only to the artist for his own benefit, but in order to make clear that his duty lies in the performance of this thing, and the performance of it with all his might, and heart, and soul.

This will not be done by the painter going out into the fields and forests of nature and not painting exactly what he sees: if he paints a few twisted sticks instead of the heavy, swinging boughs of the beech tree, the gnarled, stubborn contortions of the oak's great branches; the tall spire of the poplars, that queen of the woods; or the elegant, ever-trembling aspen or birch. Let him not deceive himself and expect us to believe him, when, having painted a bunch of green with a red top to it, he tells us it is a flower; or some smooth, lead-colored surface with a few streaks of white upon it, which he may choose to tell us is light-receiving and light-reflecting water; this we will not believe, although he tells us that the great Dutch artists did their work in this manner; we will let by-gones be by-gones, and leave the Dutchman by the side of his easel; but most assuredly will not receive with our modern eyes, his assertion, or his painting for the fact, which we know to be a mirror of the gorgeous sky, presenting a sunset like another sunset, which trembles in the shadow of the shaken trees, and flitters a long path to the gleaming stars.

Let him not tell us that a flat space, although painted ever so blue, is a sky because he chooses to place therein something lumpy, humpy, and white, which he calls upon our courtesy to declare to be clouds. We cannot do this, and what is more, we will not, for we know what clouds are, although we cannot attempt to tell for ourselves. We know it is not like this, when Allingham has told us of those "long, pale, purple clouds above," that the evening brings, or while we believe with Shelley, that the Witch of Atlas could have

—"Called out of the hollow turrets

Of those high clouds, white, golden, and vermillion,
The armies of her ministering spirits—

In mighty legions, million after million

They came, each troop emblazoning its merits

On meteor flags; and many a proud pavilion

Of the intertexture of the atmosphere,

They pitched upon the plain of the calm mere."

We will not receive of those things, either for trees, for flowers, for water or for clouds; still less will we take the commonplace inanity we so often see painted for human beauty, least of all when intellectual beauty is to be expressed, when it should bear

"The awful shadow of some unseen power;"

or the traces of gallantly endured suffering, or patient, long trusting hope, or whatever varied stamp the index of the mind should bear.

It will be well when endeavoring to express a meaning in the representation of physical things that the artist should avoid the error or the fault into which Raphael fell when he painted a picture which is in our National Gallery, called "St. Catherine;" called so for no other reason, as far as we can see, than because it shows a stoutish young woman leaning upon a wheel which has curved spikes upon its circumference, and because, also, she has her eyes directed upward.

Being placed in this great national collection, we are bound to receive the picture referred to as genuine, although we ourselves have considerable doubts if such is the case—we are, therefore, bound to receive the work as a specimen of the master on the voucher of better judges of such a matter than ourselves, and on this authority shall proceed to make some remarks upon it, in order to what, in our opinion, it is well the artist should avoid.

It is desirable, in the first case, to be particularly careful that the features of a head be correctly drawn, and especially when the whole subject and interest of the picture centres upon this point alone; now, in this "Saint Catherine," there is hardly a single feature on the face which is what artists call "in drawing;" the eyes look in different directions, the form of the nostrils is incorrect, and they are far too small for nature, while the bounding line of the face, which is in a three-quarter view, is still more in error than either of these; so much of the face: now for the expression thereof; this is ordinary to the last degree, wants spirituality and elevation, and above all, purity. The attitude of the figure has that peculiar sort of dilettante pose about it which was, and we regret to say, is, so much admired in Vandyke's portraits; one of the hands, which hangs down, wants expressive force to be in keeping with the rapt feeling which is intended to be conveyed by the rest of the action of the figure; this, in itself, though not badly drawn, is of coarse and common type, the fingers thick at the root and then coming sharply to a point, an unpardonable fault, because, although the face may be an imperfect production, yet the hand, which has been done with much care, is clearly executed from a badly chosen model: the fingers are as we have said, when of course, they should have had long, clearly defined, and elegant forms.

We suspect that the draperies, which are carefully painted, could hardly be accounted for, as they say—that is, that their folds could not, probably, be followed out so as

to decide the cause of the position of each, its curvature, or the relative position of one to the other.

There is a good deal to be considered in the landscape of this picture, and much to be praised for clearness and evident purpose with which it was painted.

Having said so much against this picture, it becomes us to say what we observe as its beauties: these are, that the color is extremely good, that the effort of care has been honestly maintained throughout (for which reason we are inclined to think that the picture is not a work of Raphael's, or, if by him, that it was executed when he was a mere tyro); the flesh-tints have been heedfully studied, and the pigments used with forethought, so that the whole picture is bright and clear; there is an expression about the lips, which, if better sustained by the eyes, would be of the highest art.

We have expressed our doubts of the genuineness of the picture, and are certain that five out of ten of the students in the neighboring Royal Academy, that is, those of any talent, would produce a picture which should better express the subject than this one, because they would at least endeavor to obtain a nobler expression; they would draw the features better; we hope they would design the attitude with more genuine passion, and are certain that they would not err in painting the hand in the manner we have stated.

That we should have dared to approach a work of Raphael's in this irreverent manner may seem surprising to some of our readers, yet we cannot help ourselves in doing so, because it was desirable to comment upon a picture which is well known from engravings, in order to suggest the avoidance of several errors to those who may take the trouble to read this article, and on this account we beg their forgiveness, however much they may be astonished at our presumption.

J. G. S.

THE satellites of genius are commonly of so indifferent a mold, that their own folly is reflected on their master, rather than his luster reflected on them. This is one of the few instances in which contrast, occasioned by juxtaposition, is injurious to one party, without being at all serviceable to the other. Boswell, though one of the most respectable of the tribe of literary dangles, is scarcely an exception. He had just sufficient intellect and acquirements to preserve a tolerable footing of his own; while his obsequiousness and ready adulation toward the Leviathan of his idolatry were precisely adapted to the despotic temper of Johnson, and formed, in fact, the main secret of their friendship. In general it may be affirmed, that no real genius can play a secondary part, even with minds of a much superior stamp.—*Chulov*.

THE taste of the citizen and of the mere peasant are in all respects the same. The former gilds his balls, paints his stone-work and statues white, plants his trees in lines or circles, cuts his yew-trees four-square or conic; or gives them what he can of the resemblance of birds, or bears, or men; squirrels up his rivulets in jetteaux; in short, admires no part of nature but her ductility; exhibits everything that is glaring, that implies expense or that effects surprise because it is unnatural. The peasant is his admirer.—*Shenstone*.

HOW PRINCE CHARLES SAVED MY LIFE;

OR, A PSYCHOLOGICAL ENIGMA RESOLVED BY ART.

BY MRS. E. VALE SMITH.

I HAVE always been very sensitive, I think now morbidly sensitive, in regard to giving other people trouble. This feeling has oftentimes led me, not only to exert myself far beyond my physical strength, but has impelled me to endure wrongs and burdens that ought long ago to have been shifted to other shoulders, and has induced in me a degree of reticence respecting my mental and moral perplexities, which has doubtless shut me out from much sympathy and counsel, which would have been timely and beneficial could I have brought myself to have made the necessary revelations. And not only has this paramount desire to avoid annoying or troubling others been the cause of much positive suffering, but it has also misled many of my intimate friends, and even relatives, into an entirely erroneous estimate of my character, aims, and feelings.

Often, while I have been suffering unspeakable mental agonies, which, acting upon a naturally weak and highly sensitive organization—have shattered and well-nigh wrecked the poor remnant of my mortal frame—and still forcing myself, in the meanwhile, to patience and silence, lest I should give pain to those I loved, by causing them to share my terrible conflicts, my ceaseless unrest; often have I been complimented—for compliments (alas! how unreal) were meant—on the “immobility of my temperament,” and the impassibility of my nerves! While my heart has been crushed with the heaviest sorrow that human heart can ever know, I have been envied for the “stoical indifference” with which I baffled the surging waves of a resistless destiny, and put aside the common weaknesses of our common humanity. All my life long have both my actions and motives been misconstrued, through my over careful regard to preserve the quietude of others, intact.

And so, isolated from human sympathy, at more than one epoch in my life—lacking friendly intercourse on the subject with which I was most preoccupied—I have come to make friends of inanimate objects, of dumb animals whose affection so far outgrows their reason, and of unconscious infancy, whom no doubts and perplexities annoy. The gnarled branch of a withered and blasted tree has fastened my attention for days and even weeks, whenever I came within sight of its barren and sapless branches, feeling that I poured out upon its deformity the surcharged and abnormal fancies of a wearied brain, drawing from it in return lessons of endurance and patience, such as the human beings about me only tended to dispel; from this old tree I was always involuntarily drawn as the twilight deepened into darkness, toward a particular star, which seemed to hang a-droop from the heavens, as if waiting the grasp of some mortal hand, which it knew was upheld, entreating succor. What an inspiration, and what a hope was distilled from its nightly brightness! The deep pathos